



United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Wyoming State Office  
P.O. Box 1828  
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82003-1828

In Reply Refer To:

4180 (930) P

May 20, 1998

Instruction Memorandum No. WY-98-56  
Expires 9/30/99

To: District Managers and Area Managers

From: State Director

Subject: Healthy Range Land Initiative

**DD 7/3/98**

The attached Washington Office Instruction Memorandum 98-91 directs us to provide Washington Office 220, by August 1, 1998, Wyoming's schedule for implementing Standards and Guidelines. They ask that our time frame for completion not exceed 10 years. Allotments are the most likely unit for assessment; therefore, your annual schedule should reflect 10 percent of your allotments.

So that a response can be prepared and sent by the due date, please provide, beginning this fiscal year and annually for 10 years allotments by name and priority to be assessed. Your priority should reflect your best estimate of how you think the assessments will proceed. The process for prioritizing allotments or other areas must reflect the full range of physical and biological factors addressed by the standards. Previous allotment categorization (M, I, and C) may be useful in establishing priorities, but remember that the categorization process, in most cases, did not fully consider indicators of health and ecosystem function. For example, in determining the priority order for allotments or other areas, you should review the State 303(d) list. The Clean Water Act requires the State water quality management agency to biannually identify surface waters that are not meeting water quality standards. Priority should be given to allotments or areas where grazing related water quality issues exist, particularly for those that lack the application of appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP). You should also review all areas with habitat for known threatened, endangered, or special status species and evaluate their priority for assessment and corrective action especially where new listings have been made. Permit/lease expiration and levels of expressed public interest are also important considerations when setting priorities.

Permit/lease renewal, however, is apt to have an impact on our ability to implement Standards and Guidelines within the time frames desired. Permit/lease renewals are not dependent upon implementation of Standards and Guidelines. They need to be done and cannot be delayed. Ideally, it is best if Standards and Guidelines implementation could proceed with permit/lease renewal. However, with the number of renewals which may be coming due, the need to comply with NEPA as confirmed by the Combs Wash decision, and the time needed for protest and appeals, this will not always be possible. Therefore, to help determine just how much of a possible affect renewal will have on your implementation schedule also indicate with your submission, month and year the

permit(s)/lease(s) affecting the allotment expire. If you feel the renewal work load will ultimately extend Standards and Guidelines implementation beyond 10 years, please reflect that in your submission and provide an explanation.

Please submit your 10 year implementation schedule in the following format no later than July 3, 1998.

| FY   | Allotment by Priority | category<br>(M,I,C) | Permit/Lease Exp.<br>Month/Year |
|------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1998 |                       |                     |                                 |
| 1999 |                       |                     |                                 |
| 2000 |                       |                     |                                 |
| 2001 |                       |                     |                                 |
| 2002 |                       |                     |                                 |
| 2003 |                       |                     |                                 |
| 2004 |                       |                     |                                 |
| 2005 |                       |                     |                                 |
| 2006 |                       |                     |                                 |
| 2007 |                       |                     |                                 |

Direct any questions to Tom Enright 307-775-6329.

s/Alan R. Pierson

1 Attachment:

1 - Washington Office IM No. 98-91 (19 pp.)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

April 10, 1998

In Reply Refer To:  
4120, 4000 (240) P

EMS TRANSMISSION 4/10/98  
Instruction Memorandum No. 98-91  
Expires: 9/30/99

To: AFOs (excluding Alaska and Eastern States)

From: Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning

Subject: Healthy Rangeland Initiative: Implementation of Standards and Guidelines

Standards and guidelines are to be used in several ways. The standards and guidelines and the information gained in assessing standards are an important communication tool. Addressing rangeland health in terms of the standards can aid in identifying the source of problems before they require corrective action and in identifying opportunities for management actions to best meet the standard. Additionally, they provide a clear statement and common understanding of the expected resource conditions and acceptable management practices. This common understanding will allow the livestock operator and BLM to design management practices and actions to achieve those standards consistent with the guidelines.

The standards and guidelines also define minimum resource conditions that must be achieved and maintained. As provided in the 1995 revisions to the grazing regulations, the BLM must ensure that grazing related actions conform with the appropriate standards and guidelines.

The purpose of this Instruction Memorandum is to--

- provide a brief overview of standards and guidelines implementation as described in the 1995 revisions to the grazing regulations and the 1994 Final Environmental Impact Statement,
- describe your responsibilities in the implementation of standards and guidelines as they pertain to the management of grazing of public lands, and
- introduce the DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE.

Below is a series of questions and answers designed to accomplish the first two purposes listed above.

**What is the purpose of the standards and guidelines?**

The purpose of the standards and guidelines at 43 CFR subpart 4180 is to improve the health of the public rangelands. The standards and guidelines are intended to help the Bureau, rangeland users and others focus on a common understanding of acceptable resource conditions and work together to achieve that vision.

**What is a standard?**

Standards of rangeland health are expressions of levels of physical and biological condition or degree of function required for healthy, sustainable rangelands and define minimum resource conditions that must be achieved and maintained. Determination of rangeland health is based upon conformance with the standards. Application of the standard to the site considers the potential of the site without regard for the type or levels of use or management actions or decisions.

(Note: Standards may be supplemented with additional requirements where appropriate to meet resource objectives identified in an activity plan or land use plan. However, all resource objectives must, at a minimum, be consistent with the standards for the area.)

**What is a guideline?**

Guidelines for grazing management are types of grazing management methods and practices determined to be appropriate to ensure that standards can be met or that significant progress can be made toward meeting the standard. Guidelines are tools that help managers and permittees achieve standards. Guidelines implemented under 43 CFR 4180 are specific to livestock grazing. Guidelines are best management practices such as grazing systems, vegetative treatments, or improvement projects which could be used to achieve rangeland health standards.

**How do I implement standards and guidelines?**

An important aspect of standards and guidelines implementation requires that you ensure that all grazing related actions conform with the appropriate standards and guidelines. As described in the 1995 revisions to the grazing regulations, standards and guidelines implementation involves:

- prioritizing areas to be assessed,
- conducting assessments to determine if assessed areas meet, are making “significant progress” toward or fail to achieve standards or conform with guidelines,
- if failing, determining if grazing is a significant factor,

- if grazing is a significant factor, take appropriate action by modifying the terms and conditions, and
- evaluating the effectiveness of terms and conditions (See attached flow chart).

Standards and guidelines are to be implemented by applying terms and conditions to--

- grazing permits, leases and authorizations;
- grazing-related portions of activity plans (including Allotment Management Plans); and
- range improvement-related activities.

### **What is an assessment?**

"Assessment" means the analysis, synthesis and interpretation of information, including monitoring data, to characterize the health of an allotment or other management unit. It is similar to "evaluation", as frequently used in the rangeland management program. Gathering new information in the field may be necessary as part of the assessment process.

### **How do I prioritize areas to assess?**

You may choose an allotment or a group of allotments as a basis for an assessment or may use some other unit such as a watershed. The unit selected should have common resource characteristics at a scale appropriate to the complexity of the issues.

Prioritize areas by allotments, groups of allotments, watersheds or other areas and set a schedule for addressing them, giving priority to areas believed to be at risk--in degraded condition or downward trend and in danger of losing potential. This basic consideration may be supplemented with local criteria. You must document a clear rationale for selecting the assessment priority and determining the schedule to follow in conducting assessments and taking appropriate actions.

The process for prioritizing allotments or other areas must reflect the full range of physical and biological factors addressed by the standards. Previous allotment categorization (M, I, and C) may be useful in establishing priorities, but remember that the categorization process, in most cases, did not fully consider indicators of health and ecosystem function. You should strive to involve affected permittees and lessees, interested publics, other units of government and Indian tribes throughout the assessments, including activities associated with prioritizing allotments.

**What is the goal of the assessment?**

The goal of the assessment is to determine if areas are meeting standards and conforming to guidelines or making significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines.

**What information is needed for an assessment?**

Monitoring data collected in the past will often be an important source of information in conducting an assessment, but years of monitoring data are not necessarily required to complete an assessment. To determine whether current management is resulting in meeting the standards, you should use the best data and resource information available to you. This may include quantitative data from monitoring and inventories, qualitative information, professional knowledge, and knowledge provided by State agencies, public land users and others. Decisions must be made on a reasoned and rational basis, supportable, and well documented.

In limited cases, quantitative monitoring data, gathered over a period of years, may be essential in determining whether an area meets the standards or is making significant progress. It is anticipated that in these cases, it could take several grazing seasons to determine direction and magnitude of change. However, it would be inconsistent with our mandate to manage the public rangelands if we were to allow an allotment or watershed to deteriorate while prolonged monitoring studies are conducted. If reliable indicators of rangeland health demonstrate that areas are not meeting or not making significant progress toward meeting standards, you should take appropriate action.

If you determine that inadequate information is available to determine whether areas are meeting standards and conforming to guidelines or making significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines, you should, without delay, initiate action necessary to gather the minimum information needed to make the determination.

**How long do I have to assess the rangelands under my jurisdiction?**

You must complete the assessments in a reasonable time frame. In most states, Authorized Officers should ensure that at least ten percent of the livestock grazing lands under their jurisdiction are assessed each year until the assessments are complete. In states with an extremely large number of allotments, where assessing ten percent of the allotments per year would impose an impossible workload, a longer time-frame may be considered. In all states, the State Director should submit a draft implementation plan to the Assistant Director, WO-200 for approval, by August 1, 1998.

**Is an assessment an action that can be protested and appealed under 43 CFR 4160?**

No. Assessments are preliminary findings that build an administrative record. 43 CFR 4160 applies to actions (such as the renewal of a permit), terms and conditions, or modifications relating to applications, permits and agreements (including range improvement permits) or leases. As always, any applicant, permittee, lessee or any other person whose interest is adversely affected by a final decision of the authorized officer may appeal as provided in 43 CFR 4.470.

**What if I determine an area or allotment is meeting standards and conforming to guidelines or making significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines?**

If you determine an area or allotment meets the standards and conforms to the guidelines or is making significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines, you must--

- review the existing terms and conditions to ensure that they will provide for continued achievement of (or progress towards meeting) the standards and guidelines, and
- continue monitoring and evaluation activities that will provide assurance that the area continues to meet the standards and conform to the guidelines or make significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines.

**What if I determine an area or allotment is not meeting standards and conforming to guidelines or not making significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines?**

If you determine an area or allotment fails to meet the standards and conform to the guidelines and is failing to make significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines, you must determine if grazing is a significant factor.

**What should I consider in determining if grazing is a significant factor in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines?**

You should not assume that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines. You should determine if grazing is a factor only after reviewing the best resource information available to you. This may include quantitative data from monitoring and inventories, qualitative information, professional knowledge, and knowledge provided by public land users and others. Actions needed to improve grazing management to conform with guidelines or to meet standards should not be delayed solely because quantitative monitoring data are lacking.

If adequate information is not available to determine whether current livestock grazing is a significant factor in failing to meet the standards for a priority area, you should, without delay, initiate action necessary to gather the minimum information needed to make the determination.

**What do I do if grazing is not a significant factor in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines?**

If you determine that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use are not significant factor(s) in failing to achieve the standards, you should consult other BLM guidance to revise management to meet the standards.

**What do I do if grazing is a significant factor in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines?**

If you determine that existing terms and conditions result in grazing management practices or levels of grazing use that are significant factor(s) in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines, you must modify the terms and conditions for grazing use.

**By when must I modify the terms and conditions?**

Upon your determination that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use are significant factor(s) in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines, you must modify the terms and conditions as soon as practicable but no later than the start of the next grazing year (March 1st).

**What follows the modification of terms and conditions?**

After modifying the terms and conditions, you should evaluate the effectiveness of the modified terms and conditions in meeting the standards and conforming to the guidelines. If future monitoring/evaluations indicate that the area has not achieved or is not making significant progress toward meeting the standards and conforming with the guidelines, again modify the terms and conditions as appropriate.

**What are my responsibilities, once areas are meeting standards and conforming to guidelines or making significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines?**

You have a responsibility to periodically monitor and evaluate areas to ensure they continue to meet the standards and conform to guidelines or to make significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines.



**While the assessment efforts are ongoing, what do I do when a permit or lease comes up for renewal or transfer for an unassessed allotment?**

You should consider the renewal or transfer of a permit or lease to be an opportune time to conduct an assessment of rangeland health and make any needed changes in the terms and conditions. If you do not conduct an assessment of rangeland health when a permit or lease is renewed or transferred, you must include terms and conditions that ensure achievement of the standards and conformance with appropriate guidelines. These terms and conditions must include a statement that if an assessment results in a determination that changes are necessary in order to comply with the standards and guidelines, the permit (or lease) will be reissued subject to revised terms and conditions.

The term of grazing permits or leases shall be for ten years, unless one of the exceptions listed in 43 CFR 4130.2(d) applies. Permits or leases may be revised if additional information indicates changes in management are needed to ensure allotments or areas are meeting standards and conforming to guidelines or making significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines.

**How do standards and guidelines affect low priority allotments?**

It may not be possible to complete assessments and take appropriate action within the near future for low priority allotments. Given workloads and priorities, it is conceivable that some allotments may never have terms and conditions specific to that allotment and that the general requirement to be in compliance with the standard is all that ever appears on the permit or lease. Regardless, in the event that grazing is determined to be a significant contributing factor in failing to achieve the standards or conform with the guidelines on a low priority allotment, you are required to take appropriate action under 43 CFR 4180.

**How does standards and guidelines implementation affect our NEPA responsibilities?**

The NEPA analysis for most State or regional standards and guidelines has been completed. However, as has long been the case, you must ensure NEPA compliance as terms and conditions are modified to ensure the terms and conditions result in meeting the standards and conforming to the guidelines or making significant progress toward meeting the standards and conforming to the guidelines.

**How will we keep track of our efforts?**

You must submit, by State, a progress report by October 15th of each year. You will be required to report by allotments and acreage the status of your implementation efforts. The format is provided in the attached DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE, STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY RANGELANDS

## Summary

You need to move promptly to implement standards and guidelines and to take needed actions to improve rangeland health. 43 CFR subpart 4180 was written to achieve positive, on-the-ground changes in resource conditions. Development and approval of standards has been a significant accomplishment, but without full and effective implementation, it will be meaningless. Our goal as managers of the public rangelands must be to improve rangeland health and provide for multiple use and sustained yield of these lands. Implementation of the standards and guidelines is a critical means to reach that goal.

The overall purpose of the standards and guidelines is, in working with permittees, lessees and the public to make a difference on the land. Success will be measured in terms of concrete outcomes--not in terms of procedural actions. Success will be registered in recovering riparian areas, improved habitat conditions for wildlife, cleaner water, stabilized soils, robust native vegetation populations and sustainable livestock grazing operations. Procedural actions--plans written, data gathered, projects initiated, protests resolved or status reports filed--are merely means to an end. They are not, in and of themselves, the things about which our public *cares*. And they are not, in themselves, evidence of success. Our job is to change things on the land.

The attached DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE, STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY RANGELANDS and Standards and Guidelines Implementation Flow Chart is intended to assist managers and all employees responsible for implementing standards and guidelines.

Signed by:  
Maitland Sharpe  
Assistant Director  
Renewable Resources and Planning

Authenticated by:  
Robert M. Williams  
Directives, Records  
& Internet Group, WO540

## 2 Attachments

- 1 - The Standards and Guidelines Implementation Flow Chart (1 p)
- 2 - DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE. (10 pp)

## **Standards and Guidelines Implementation Flow Chart**

**Not available electronically**

## **Attachment 1**

**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE  
STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY RANGELANDS**

**Sections**

**I. Policy Statement**

**II. Definitions**

**III. Standards and Guidelines Implementation, including flow chart**

**IV. Report**

**I. Policy Statement**

*The overall purpose of the standards and guidelines is, in working with permittees, lessees and the public, to make a difference on the land. The success will be measured in terms of concrete outcomes--not in terms of procedural actions. Success will be registered in recovering riparian areas, improved habitat conditions for wildlife, cleaner water, stabilized soils, robust native vegetation populations and sustainable livestock grazing operations. Procedural actions--plans written, data gathered, projects initiated, protests resolved or status reports--are merely means to an end. They are not, in and of themselves, the things about which our public cares. And they are not, in themselves, evidence of success. Our job is to change things on the land.*

**II. Definitions**

Appropriate Action — means implementing actions pursuant to subparts 4110, 4120, 4130, and 4160 of [the grazing regulations] that will result in significant progress toward fulfillment of the standards and significant progress toward conformance with the guidelines. [4180.2(c)]

Authorized Officer -- is used to denote specific responsibilities of management personnel.

You -- means all personnel responsible for standards and guidelines implementation.

Standard -- Standards of rangeland health are expressions of levels of physical and biological condition or degree of function required for healthy, sustainable rangelands and define minimum resource conditions that must be achieved and maintained. Determination of rangeland health is based upon conformance with the standards. Application of the standard to the site considers the potential of the site without regard for the type or levels of use or management actions or decisions.

(Note: Standards may be supplemented with additional requirements where appropriate to meet resource objectives identified in an activity plan or land use plan. However, all resource objectives must, at a minimum, be consistent with the standards for the area.)

Attachment 2 (10 pp.)

Guideline -- Guidelines for grazing management are types of grazing management methods and practices determined to be appropriate to ensure that standards can be met or that significant progress can be made toward meeting the standard. Guidelines are tools that help managers and permittees achieve standards. Guidelines implemented under 43 CFR 4180 are specific to livestock grazing. Guidelines are best management practices such as grazing systems, vegetative treatments, or improvement projects which could be used to achieve rangeland health standards.

Significant Progress--movement toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines that is acceptable in terms of rate and magnitude. Acceptable levels of rate and magnitude must be realistic in terms of the capability of the resource, but must also be as expeditious and effective as practicable.

Significant Factor--a principal cause in the failure to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines. A significant factor would typically be a use that, if modified, would enable an area to achieve or make significant progress toward achieving the standards. To be a significant factor, a use may be one of several factors contributing to less-than-healthy conditions; it need not be the sole factor inhibiting progress towards the standards.

### **III. Standards and Guidelines Implementation**

Implementing standards and guidelines requires that Authorized Officers--

1.       prioritize areas and set an assessment schedule,
2.       conduct assessments and make "meets, significant progress or fails" determinations,
3.       if fails, determine if grazing is a significant factor,
4.       if grazing is a significant factor, take appropriate action by modifying the terms and conditions, and
5.       evaluate effectiveness of the revised management.

The Standards and Guidelines Implementation Flow Chart graphically portrays the sequence of implementation.

**Standards and Guidelines Implementation Flow Chart**

Not available electronically



Each step in implementing the standards and guidelines is described in greater detail below.

## **1. Prioritizing Areas and Setting Assessment Schedule**

*Prioritize areas by allotments, groups of allotments, watersheds or other areas and set a schedule for addressing them, giving priority to areas believed to be at risk--in degraded condition or downward trend and in danger of losing potential.*

The preamble to the 1995 grazing regulations states "...it is not possible to complete assessments of rangeland health and to take appropriate corrective action...immediately upon completion of the...standards and guidelines...The Department intends that assessments and corrective actions will be taken in priority order as determined by BLM."

Authorized Officers are responsible for determining the priority order for conducting assessments and carrying out needed actions. You must document a clear rationale for selecting the assessment priority and determining the schedule to follow in conducting assessments and taking appropriate actions.

The assessment must be completed in a reasonable time frame. In most States, Authorized Officers should ensure that at least ten percent of the livestock grazing lands under their jurisdiction are assessed each year until the initial round of assessments is complete. In States with an extremely large number of allotments, where assessing ten percent of the allotments per year would impose an impossible workload, a somewhat longer time-frame may be considered. In all States, the State Director should submit a draft implementation plan to the Assistant Director, WO-200 for approval, by August 1, 1998.

The process for prioritizing allotments or other areas must reflect the full range of physical and biological factors addressed by the standards. Previous allotment categorization (M, I, and C) may be useful in establishing priorities, but remember that the categorization process, in most cases, did not fully consider indicators of health and ecosystem function. For example, in determining the priority order for allotments or other areas, you should review the State 303(d) list. The Clean Water Act requires the State water quality management agency to bi-annually identify surface waters that are not meeting water quality standards. Priority should be given to allotments or areas where grazing-related water quality issues exist, particularly for those that lack the application of appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP). You should also review all areas with habitat for known threatened, endangered, or special status species and evaluate their priority for assessment and corrective action.

The renewal or transfer of a permit or lease may be an opportune time to conduct an assessment of rangeland health and make any needed changes in the terms and conditions. If you do not conduct an assessment of rangeland health when a permit or lease is renewed or transferred, you must include terms and conditions that ensure achievement of the standards and conformance with appropriate guidelines. These terms and conditions must include a statement that if an assessment results in a determination that changes are necessary in order to comply with the standards and

guidelines, the permit (or lease) will be reissued subject to revised terms and conditions. Suggested language:

*The terms and conditions of your permit (or lease) may be modified if additional information indicates that revision is necessary to conform with 43 CFR 4180.*

Authorized Officers may choose the allotment or a group of allotments as the basis for assessments or may use some other unit such as a watershed. The unit selected should have common resource characteristics at a scale appropriate to the complexity of the issues.

The process for prioritizing allotments or other areas must reflect the full range of physical and biological factors addressed by the standards. Previous allotment categorization (M, I, and C) may be useful in establishing priorities, but remember that the categorization process, in most cases, did not fully consider indicators of health and ecosystem function.

You should strive to involve affected permittees and lessees, interested publics, other units of government and Indian tribes throughout the assessments, including activities associated with prioritizing allotments.

## **2. Conducting Assessments**

*Following the priority schedule, conduct assessments to determine whether the areas are meeting standards and conforming to guidelines or making significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines.*

The purpose of assessing an allotment, or other areas for rangeland health is to determine whether standards are being met and guidelines followed. Monitoring data collected in the past will often be an important source of information in conducting an assessment, but years of monitoring data are not a required for conducting an assessment.

"Assessment" means the analysis, synthesis and interpretation of information, including monitoring data, to characterize the health of an allotment or other management unit. It is similar to "evaluation", as frequently used in the rangeland management program. Gathering new information in the field may be necessary as part of the assessment process. "Monitoring" means the periodic gathering of information.

To determine whether current management is resulting in meeting the standards, you should use the best data and resource information available to you. This may include quantitative data from monitoring and inventories, qualitative information, professional knowledge, and knowledge provided by State agencies, public land users and others. You should gather additional field information only where it is needed to determine if standards are being met and what appropriate action to take in order to move resource conditions toward the standards.

In limited cases, quantitative monitoring data, gathered over a period of years, may be essential in determining whether an area meets the standards or is making significant progress. It is anticipated that in these cases, it could take several grazing seasons to determine direction and magnitude of change. However, actions will be taken to establish significant progress toward conformance as soon as sufficient information is available to indicate a need for changes in grazing practices.

Quantitative monitoring data are not always required to make those determinations nor to implement actions to improve livestock grazing management. It would be inconsistent with our mandate to manage the public rangelands if we were to allow an allotment or watershed to deteriorate while prolonged monitoring studies are conducted. If reliable indicators of rangeland health demonstrate that areas are not meeting or not making significant progress toward meeting standards, you should take appropriate action.

If you determine that inadequate information is available to determine whether areas are meeting standards and conforming to guidelines or making significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines, you should, without delay, initiate action necessary to gather the minimum information needed to make the determination. Generally, resource information or data collected should be tied directly to the standards and guidelines.

In assessing the health of rangelands to determine whether action of the authorized officer is necessary, consider the extent to which standards are being met and guidelines followed across the area of a grazing allotment or group of allotments. Failure to comply with a standard in an isolated area will not necessarily mean the area being assessed is failing to meet the standards or requires a corrective action. This exception would not apply if the isolated area is of significant ecological importance or if water quality standards are not being met.

At the end of the assessment, you must determine that the area being assessed --

1. meets the standards and conforms to the guidelines or is making significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines, or
2. fails to meet the standards and conforms to the guidelines and is failing to make significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines.

If you determine the area meets the standards and conforms to the guidelines or is making significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines, you must--

1. review the existing terms and conditions to ensure that they will provide for continued achievement of )or progress towards meeting( the standards and guidelines, and
2. plan for monitoring and evaluation activities to provide long-term assurance that the area continues to meet, or make significant progress toward meeting, the standards.

If you determine the area fails to meet or make significant progress toward meeting the standards and conforming to the guidelines, you must proceed to step 3 below, "Determine If Grazing Is a Factor."

### **3. Determine If Grazing Is a Factor**

*For areas determined to be not meeting standards and conforming to guidelines and failing to make significant progress toward meeting standards and conforming to guidelines, determine if existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines.*

You should not assume that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines. You should determine if grazing is a factor only after reviewing the best data and resource information available to you. This may include quantitative data from monitoring and inventories, qualitative information, professional knowledge, and knowledge provided by public land users and others.

If inadequate information is available to determine whether current livestock grazing is a significant factor in failing to meet the standards for a priority area, you should, without delay, initiate action necessary to gather the minimum information needed to make the determination.

Determining if grazing is a factor should employ the minimum information needed to decide whether livestock grazing is a significant factor in the failure to meet the standards or conform to the guidelines. Collecting additional data in the field is not an end in itself. The goal is to use information to work with permittees, lessees and the public to improve resource conditions and to ensure that standards for rangeland health are being met at the earliest possible date.

If you determine that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use are significant factor(s) in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines, you must proceed to step 4 below, "Taking appropriate action by modifying the terms and conditions."

If you determine that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use are not significant factor(s) in failing to achieve the standards, you should consult other BLM guidance to revise management to meet the standards.

#### 4. **Taking appropriate action by modifying the terms and conditions**

*If existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines, you must, in consultation with permittees, lessees, the State and interested public, take appropriate action and modifying the terms and conditions by the start of the next grazing season to ensure the terms and conditions result in meeting the standards and conforming to the guidelines or making significant progress toward meeting the standards and conforming to the guidelines.*

Terms and conditions are the prescription for applying standards and guidelines to a specific permit or lease. For example, a standard to maintain healthy, productive plant and animal communities at viable population levels could be addressed by a guideline requiring appropriate rest during the growing season. A term and condition of the permit or lease may list specific dates pastures must be rested, or require the operator to follow a specific grazing plan.

Range improvement permits and cooperative range improvement agreements are also management tools used to improve resource conditions and achieve livestock management objectives. Range improvement projects must be consistent with standards and guidelines. Any range improvement permits and cooperative range improvement agreements must include terms and conditions needed to ensure achievement of, or at least show significant progress towards, meeting the standards and conforming with the appropriate guidelines. Authorized Officers should continue to evaluate range improvement projects based on their effectiveness to meet the rangeland health standards.

Appropriate action must be taken in cases where standards are not being met or when significant progress is not being made, and livestock use is found to be a significant contributing factor. Where appropriate action is needed, it may include adjusting the season or duration of livestock use; reducing livestock stocking rates; modifying or relocating range improvements; modifying or implementing grazing systems; implementing best management practices; or other such actions. Actions can be phased in as long as significant progress is achieved. In other words, it is not mandatory that actions result in immediate compliance with standards and guidelines, but it is mandatory to take action that will result in significant progress (as soon as practicable but not later than the start of the next grazing year.)

Appropriate action may also include implementing a management plan, such as a watershed-based allotment management plan or a functional equivalent (Coordinated Resource Management Plans, etc.). Implementing a management plan means taking action to bring grazing management into conformance with plan objectives, which in turn conform with standards and guidelines. Merely developing an implementation plan, implementation schedule, or monitoring schedule does not constitute an appropriate action. Management change must occur on-the-ground to constitute appropriate action.

To ensure compliance with water quality standards, you should review the State-approved BMPs and ensure that appropriate BMP components and protective measures are incorporated into terms and conditions of permits and leases.

A decision to modify the terms and conditions of a grazing permit or lease must be in conformance with the land use plan and must be supported by appropriate NEPA analysis. If the terms and conditions modifications have been previously addressed in the NEPA analysis for an allotment management plan, a similar type activity plan, or a related decision document, this NEPA analysis should be evaluated to determine its adequacy. If the previous analysis does not adequately cover the proposed terms and conditions modifications, a new NEPA document must be prepared. The new document may tier to, supplement, or incorporate by reference, parts of or all of an existing NEPA document.

## **5. Evaluate Effectiveness**

*Evaluate the effectiveness of management under the modified terms and conditions in meeting the standards and conforming to the guidelines. If further monitoring and evaluation indicate that the area has not achieved or is not making significant progress toward meeting the standards and conforming with the guidelines, further modify the terms and conditions by the start of the next grazing season, in consultation with permittees, lessees, the State and interested public, to ensure the terms and conditions result in meeting the standards and conforming to the guidelines or making significant progress toward meeting the standards and conforming to the guidelines.*

After you have completed the initial assessment and taken appropriate action, gather information on a periodic basis to determine whether the appropriate action is achieving the desired resource conditions. Modify terms and conditions of the permit or lease, as needed, to achieve the standards and maintain significant progress toward the desired resource condition.

#### **IV. Report**

*Authorized Officers must submit, by State, assessment progress each year as part of the National Rangeland Inventory, Monitoring and Evaluation Report.*

Authorized Officers must submit, by State, the following information by October 15, of each year as part of the National Rangeland Inventory, Monitoring and Evaluation Report:

| Assessment Category   | Number Of Allotments Assessed |            | Number of Acres Assessed<br>)Public( |            |
|---|-------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
|   | Current Year                  | Cumulative | Current Year                         | Cumulative |
| Rangelands meeting all standards or making significant progress toward meeting the standards  |                               |            |                                      |            |
| Rangelands not meeting all standards or making significant progress toward meeting the standards, but appropriate action has been taken to ensure significant progress toward meeting the standards (livestock is a significant factor) |                               |            |                                      |            |
| Rangelands not meeting standards or making significant progress toward meeting the standards --no appropriate action has been taken to ensure significant progress toward meeting the standards (livestock is a significant factor)     |                               |            |                                      |            |
| Rangelands not meeting all standards or making significant progress toward meeting the standards due to causes other than livestock grazing   |                               |            |                                      |            |
| Total assessed  |                               |            |                                      |            |
| Total not assessed  |                               |            |                                      |            |
| Total Allotments / Acres  |                               |            |                                      |            |